

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration. Claims 1-119 were pending, with claims 30-35 and 51-55 being withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1-2, 13-14, 30-35, 51-55, 85, 88-90, and 97-98 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 3, 5-12, 15, 17-22, 86, 91, 93-94, 96, 99, 101-102, and 104 have been amended. As a result, claims 3-12, 15-29, 36-50, 56-84, 86, 87, 91-96 and 99-119 are pending for examination with claims 3, 9, 15, 21, 23, 36, 56, 70, 91, 99, and 105 being independent claims. No new matter has been added.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 23-29, 36-50, 56-84, 87, and 105-119 have been allowed. Claims 3, 4, 9, 15, 16, 21, 91, 92, 95, 99, 100 and 103 were indicated to be allowable if re-written in independent form.

Without acceding to the propriety of the rejection, Applicants have elected to re-write claims 3, 9, 15, 21, 91 and 99 into independent form to further prosecution of this application. Dependent claims 5-8, 10-12, 17-20, 22, 86, 93, 94, 96, 101, 102 and 104 have been amended to depend accordingly from the re-written claims.

As such, claims 3-12, 15-29, 36-50, 56-84, 86, 87, 91-96, and 99-119 are believed to be in condition for allowance. A notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

Summary of Telephone Conference with Examiner

The Applicants' undersigned representative thanks the Examiner for the courtesy extended during the telephone interview on September 29, 2004. During the interview, the undersigned representative asked the Examiner to clarify certain aspects of the rejection, namely on page 13, paragraph 5, it appeared that the reference "to the strap" should have been "to one another". Also, the Examiner clarified his view that claim 1 did not preclude relative vertical movement of the strap pieces. The Examiner further clarified his view that two elements lying on top of one another could be viewed as being "connected" to one another.

Applicants' representative thanked the Examiner for his views and clarification, but did not comment on whether or not there was agreement with the Examiners' characterization.

CONCLUSION

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

Respectfully submitted,
Carpenter et al., Applicants

By:



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